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SUBJECT: NEW GREEK GOVERNMENT'S COUNTERTERRORISM STEPS

REF: ATHENS 1679

11. (U) Minister of Citizens' Protection Michalis Chrysochoidis recently announced that he had re-opened the investigation into the November 17 (N17) terrorist organization, seven years after the 2002 arrests of N17 members during Chrysochoidis's previous tenure as Minister of Public Order. Chrysochoidis said publicly that "There is some evidence that should be investigated to be matched with guilty people." Chrysochoidis denied that the evidence, which reportedly was discovered in 2005, had come from the U.S. or other foreign governments. Chrysochoidis said there were no plans to re-open the investigation into the People's Revolutionary Struggle (ELA) terrorist organization following an appeals court's dismissal of charges against three convicted ELA members on December 3 (reftel) but said that any new evidence that came to light in the case would be reviewed.

12. (U) Meanwhile, Minister of Justice, Transparency, and Human Rights Haris Kastanidis announced that the government would repeal the "hoodie" law enacted by the previous Karamanlis government to increase the penalties against violent demonstrators who cover their faces during the perpetration of criminal offenses. Kastanidis also announced that the government would repeal a law that gave control of surveillance cameras, placed throughout the central part of Athens, to prosecutors during demonstrations. The proposed new law would place the cameras under the control of the Personal Data Protection Authority, an independent watchdog group with a long record of opposing video surveillance and archiving.

13. (SBU) Comment: With tough public statements about defeating violent anarchist groups and organized crime, Chrysochoidis has staked out a very visible law-and-order stance in his first two months in the job. At the same time, Kastanidis's announcements underscore another side to the government's approach, rolling back what it sees as overreaching by the previous government to strengthen law enforcement. Interestingly, the government has not announced thus far any intention to repeal key provisions of an amendment passed by the previous government July 20 to authorize creation of a DNA criminal database and to make it easier for police to conduct phone taps. Given the political sensitivities about privacy rights - especially among some constituencies of the current ruling PASOK party - it is surprising that these particular provisions have not generated major public debate or controversy. Speckhard